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Study: State pre-teens have low rate of HPV vaccination

BY PATRICK MCCRELESS

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Few Alabama preteens have received a vaccine that helps prevent certain cancers, though there have been gains in recent years, according to a new study.

The study, released by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama on Tuesday, states that only 34 percent of adolescents in the state had received the first dose of the vaccine for human papillomavirus, or HPV, in 2016 by their 13th birthday. Some health experts say there is a stigma among some parents against the vaccine, since it protects against a sexually transmitted disease. Still, work is underway across the state to educate parents that the purpose of the vaccine is to prevent deadly cancers, not give their children an excuse to have unprotected or premarital sex, they say.

"Not taking the vaccine does not mean those children won't later have sex if they so

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Oxford High student facing threat charge

BY KIRSTEN FISCUS

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An Oxford High School student on Wednesday was facing charges in connection to a threatening message written on a women's bathroom stall, officials said.

Oxford police Capt. L.G. Owens said the school's custodial staff found the message on Tuesday while cleaning the bathroom.

"We were notified by school administrators between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.," Owens said. "We had an off-duty officer at the school and he actually sent me a message as soon as administrators were notified."

Owens declined to specify what the message said or the nature of the message. The student, a 16-year-old girl whom Owens declined to name, wrote the message "not toward one individual specifically, but toward a group."

"She said she wrote it because she believes some things go unattended and wanted to see how school officials would react to it," he said. "Without giving further details, it was racial in nature."

Roy Bennett, spokesman for Oxford City Schools, wrote in an email Wednesday afternoon that the school takes students' concerns seriously.

"Our teachers, administrators, and counselors are all available to students who have

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WEATHER, 8A

Chloe Hulsey,
C.E. Hanna Elementary

PARTLY CLOUDY

HIGH: 74 LOW: 61

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OBITUARIES, 4A

Infant Kyson Amir
Carlisle, MunfordWanda Ellen
Chastain,

Jacksonville

Myrtice Cobb,
Oxford

Jack Joseph Colley

Jr., Anniston

Bettie Fuller

Davenport,

Anniston

Hartselle Neal

Frame, Anniston

Gretta Anne Jordan,

Anniston

Glenda Key

Milstead, Wedowee

Sammy Gaines

Moore, Anniston

Katherine Thomas,

Lincoln

Gloria Tyus, Annis-

ton

Annie Carol

Williamson, Heflin

Hubert "Hugo"

"Hurb" Wright,

Huntsville

Anniston, Alabama

'HORRIFIC SITUATION'



Amy Beth Bennett/(Fort Lauderdale, Fla.) Sun Sentinel

A police officer talks to parents waiting to meet up with their kids from Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., after a shooting Wednesday. Police said at least 17 people were killed and the suspected shooter, a former student, had been taken into custody.

Police: 17 killed as former student opens fire at Florida high school

BY MATT PEARCE, MOLLY HENNESSY-FISKE AND JACLYN COSGROVE

Los Angeles Times

land, officials said.

The suspected gunman, Nikolas Cruz, 19, was quickly arrested "without incident" in nearby Coral Springs, Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said. Officials think he acted alone. Cruz had been expelled from the school for "disciplinary reasons" and had made "disturbing" posts on social media before the

attack, Israel said.

Cruz was armed with at least one AR-15 semiautomatic rifle and "countless magazines," said Israel, who did not suggest a possible motive for the attack.

The attack Wednesday was the eighth-deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history, with seven of the 10 deadliest shootings hap-

pening since 2007.

"It's a horrific situation. It's just a horrible day for us," said Broward County Public Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie.

Several students reported first hearing gunshots after someone pulled a fire alarm.

Hannah Siren, 14, was in

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OXFORD



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

Police say an Anniston man turned himself in to the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office after allegedly threatening the staff and students at this Oxford daycare Wednesday afternoon.

Man allegedly threatens staff, students at daycare

BY KIRSTEN FISCUS

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Sheriff's deputies on Wednesday arrested a man after he threatened to run his car into an Oxford daycare, then threatened a worker with a loaded rifle, officials said.

Calhoun County Sheriff Matthew Wade said deputies, Oxford police and a game warden responded to the Friendship Childcare Center on Dewey Drive around 1:50 p.m.

"A man went to get his child he shouldn't have been getting, and a worker stood up to him," Wade said. "The employee told the man that he was not allowed to pick up the child and he then threatened them."

Wade identified the man as 23-year-old Daniel Blake Turner of



Anniston.

A woman at the daycare later Wednesday, who identified herself as its owner but declined to give her name, said she recognized Turner's truck as he pulled into the small

parking lot.

"I went out to his truck and told him he couldn't pick up his daughter," she said by phone. "He wasn't authorized to pick her up."

Wade said Turner threatened to kill all the employees and 26 children in the daycare.

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Gay-rights group holds off on lawsuit over Alexandria High prom

Pair of girls to attend event as a couple

BY TIM LOCKETTE

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The gay rights group Lambda Legal held off on a planned lawsuit against Alexandria High School after school officials convinced the group that two girls would indeed be able to attend the March 10 prom together.

"We're encouraged by the school district's response," said Paul Castillo, lawyer for Lambda, in a telephone interview Wednesday night.

Last week, the group gave Calhoun County Schools a Wednesday deadline - Valentine's Day - to provide written assurance that the two girls would be welcome at the prom as a couple.

One of the girls made a public "promposal" to the other last month at the school's talent show. School officials later placed at least one of the girls on in-school detention. School officials said the move was due to a general policy against "promposals" - public, sometimes showy invitations to the dance - and for defying a teacher who told the students, before the show, not to do the promposal.

School officials, in the days after the promposal, said the couple had never been banned from the prom. They also said past proms had included

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